

THE QUINTE NATURALIST

The Quinte Field Naturalists Association is affiliated with Ontario Nature, a non-profit organization sponsoring nature education, conservation and research.

NOVEMBER



KEEPING CARIBOU



Jim Schaefer photo

Monday, November 25, 2019

7:00 p.m.

Sills Auditorium

**Bridge Street United Church,
Belleville**



Jim Schaefer photo

Caribou are a culturally important, biologically fascinating keystone species whose numbers are dropping dramatically. Trent Biology Professor and passionate advocate for the North, Jim Schaefer, will explain why saving them may represent Canada's most daunting conservation challenge.



BOSTON PIZZA NIGHT



Tuscan pizza. Our favourite.

This month Boston Pizza invited us to act as hosts on the evening of Monday, November 4. Club members met hungry patrons at the door briefly told them about QFN. It was a chance to advertise our club and as a bonus it was also a fund raiser. This year we raised \$288.32.

Thanks to the “celebrity” greeters Denice Wilkins, Penny Vance, John Lowry, Donna Fano, Sharron Blaney, John Blaney, George Thomson, Elizabeth Churcher. A special thanks to Denice for organizing the event.

P.S. from Denice. **Terrific News!!**

Boston Pizza has gone straw-less as a company!! They do however make special arrangements for kids, slush drinks and guests with special needs but all the straws used are biodegradable! This is a great example of how public pressure works to make change happen!

So, let's not stop there! Continue to help reduce single-use plastic by asking for a “plastic free meal”. Ask that salad dressings, extra mayo and the like not be delivered in small plastic containers but rather in washable and reusable containers.

Also, **BYODB!!** - If you anticipate having leftovers, **Bring Your Own Doggie Bag** (container)!



And a plea from the QFN board members. Do you think that QFN should continue its activities to fund projects? - Projects like supporting students for the Youth Summit (page 4), demonstration application of bird saver window treatments at Quinte Conservation, stocking feeders at the Frink Centre. The board will be meeting in January before our general annual meeting. High on the agenda will be the need for more board members to continue our projects. We need you to help.

RAFFLE/DRAW/?

We can't seem to decide what to call it but whatever it is it's a success. Sharron Blaney has sent the following comments:

Monthly treasure table draws have been both popular and profitable. Thanks to the following members who donated items! John Lowry, Denice Wilkins, Sharron Blaney, Elizabeth Churcher, Terry Sprague, John Blaney, Sarah Kennedy, Lori and Doug Newfield.

If you have an item you would like to donate for 2020, please give details to Sharron Blaney.

Be sure to bring your loonies and toonies to the November meeting for your chance to win some especially exciting prizes—Christmas shopping made easy!!

QFN INFORMATION

Where can you or the general public find information about Quinte Field Naturalists? You can come to meetings, of course, or read your newsletter. You already know that QFN member Terry Sprague (right) is the go-to source for nature information in Prince Edward County and the Quinte area. You may even have checked his website naturestuff.net for birding information.

Look more closely at the list of links just above the slide show on the Terry's title page. Click on "Organizations." In the column titled "ItemTitle" you can click on "Quinte Field Naturalists." Terry has included Basic information about club membership and executive, listed our projects, described the advantages of belonging to the club and information about our next meeting.

Also, watch your email for breaking news (doesn't that sound impressive) about outings and events not announced elsewhere.



YOUTH SUMMIT

Max is the second of the two students QFN sponsored for Ontario Nature's tenth annual Youth Summit at Geneva Park near Orillia. Here is his report:

Dear Quinte Field Naturalists

My name is Max Tobey and I am currently a grade 12 student East Northumberland Secondary School in Brighton. I am writing this letter to express my sincere gratitude for your willingness to sponsor my attendance at the 2019 Youth Summit. I thoroughly enjoyed my experience and I learned many things that will help my own negative impact on the environment and how to help others do the same. I enjoyed participating in all the workshops and my personal favourite was "Children in the Woods" where we got to explore around Geneva Park and find its hidden treasures.

I got to meet a bunch of really cool people and even met some who were local who I am still in close contact with. The conference has taught me many things which can be transferred to my job at Presqu'île Provincial Park, which I am hoping to return to next year.

Attached with this letter is a picture of me holding a snake called the Blue Racer. It is a very rare snake which I have never seen before! Thank you very much for allowing me to participate in this truly amazing experience! where I had so much fun and I will truly cherish my memories of this place forever.

Sincerely, Max Tobey



Blue racers like the one Max is holding are endangered members of the constrictor family found, in Ontario, only on Pelee Island

EXCITEMENT IN PEC

Well OK. It's only exciting if you are a birder but how could you not be at least a little excited by the appearance of 3 noteworthy sparrow species in The County?



Photo by Jean Iron on ebird

A Harris's sparrow (top) appeared last week in a pretty unlikely location, Wellington on the Lake. This is new a subdivision on the west side of the village of Wellington. Normally new subdivisions lack bird friendly habitats like mature trees and shrubs or grassy fields but you never know what may turn up if you have bird feeders.



Photo by Kyle Blaney on ebird

This species nests in the transition zone between the boreal forest and the tundra in the central and western Arctic. Normally it migrates along the Mississippi flyway. When Harris's sparrow is found in PEC it's almost always a single bird and it does not appear every year.

If you went looking for the Harris's sparrow you had a good chance of getting this fox sparrow (centre) seen nearby as a bonus. Fox sparrows pass through this area every year. They are shy and can be hard to find so it's still a thrill to see this handsome, brightly coloured bird.



Photo by Paul Jones on ebird

The spotted towhee (bottom) was the first ever submitted to ebird in the Quinte area. It's spending time near the PEPtBO banding station which is closed for the season. Although the same size as a Baltimore orioles towhees are part of the sparrow family. This bird is the western version of our regularly nesting eastern towhee. As you might expect the main difference between this bird and the eastern towhee is the spotted back.

Like all sparrows these birds are seed eaters and will come to feeders where seed is on the ground. Keep watching. Who knows what you might find?

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Friday, December 27

Our December outing is the Christmas Bird Count. It's a chance to spend a day outside with people who share your interests. It's a day to renew old avian acquaintances or meet new ones. If you are a novice birder you can learn to identify new species. There are surprise sightings even if you are an experienced birder.

The annual Christmas Bird Count began in 1900. Frank Chapman, an ornithologist, proposed that a Christmas Bird Census should replace the Christmas "side hunt," a competition to determine what team of hunters could shoot the most birds. In that year 27 birders in 25 counts found about 90 species mainly in the northeastern United States but also California and even Toronto. Now results come in annually from sites as far flung as Rankin Inlet in Nunavut and Asuncion Bay, Paraguay.



EASTERN BLUEBIRD BY KEITH GREGOIRE

*Bio-Diversity Friendly
Shade Grown
Nicaraguan Coffee
The Perfect Hostess Gift
This Holiday Season*



Thank You for Supporting PEPCO

Last year 23 birders participated in the Belleville count. We found 58 species on count day and during count week (three days before and three days after the actual count day). What are you likely to see if you join us this year? The pictures show some possibilities. They were not taken during the bird count but they do occur on bird counts.

Please contact Tom Wheatley to let him know that you want to join a team. You don't have to be an expert; you can be a spotter. Perhaps you want to stay at home and watch your bird feeder. You can be a **feeder watcher** if you live within the circle shown on the map on the next page. Just contact Tom Wheatley. <mailto:wheatleytom@hotmail.com>.



SNOWY OWL BY KYLE BLANEY



OUR COUNT CIRCLE



WILD TURKEY BY KATHY DEGROOT

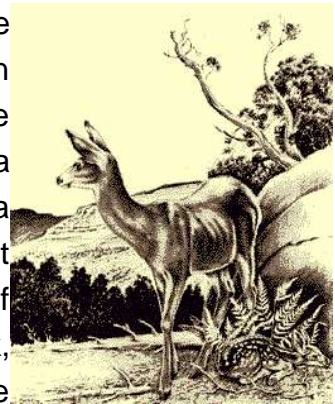


NORTHERN SHRIKE BY TINA SAWICKI

THINKING LIKE A MOUNTAIN BY ALDO LEOPOLD

Aldo Leopold has long been one of my favourite naturalist authors. He was an American based in the west but his lessons are universally applicable and timeless. The images in his stories are unforgettable. In this story he tells how a single rifle shot changed his life and extends that one incident to show how we are destroying the land we depend upon. I reread this essay every year.

A deep chesty bawl echoes from rimrock to rimrock, rolls down the mountain, and fades into the far blackness of the night. It is an outburst of wild defiant sorrow, and of contempt for all the adversities of the world. Every living thing (and perhaps many a dead one as well) pays heed to that call. To the deer it is a reminder of the way of all flesh, to the pine a forecast of midnight scuffles and of blood upon the snow, to the coyote a promise of gleanings to come, to the cowman a threat of red ink at the bank, to the hunter a challenge of fang against bullet. Yet behind these



obvious and immediate hopes and fears there lies a deeper meaning, known only to the mountain itself. Only the mountain has lived long enough to listen objectively to the howl of a wolf.

Those unable to decipher the hidden meaning know nevertheless that it is there, for it is felt in all wolf country, and distinguishes that country from all other land. It tingles in the spine of all who hear wolves by night, or who scan their tracks by day. Even without sight or sound of wolf, it is implicit in a hundred small events: the midnight whinny of a pack horse, the rattle of rolling rocks, the bound of a fleeing deer, the way shadows lie under the spruces. Only the ineducable tyro can fail to sense the presence or absence of wolves, or the fact that mountains have a secret opinion about them.

My own conviction on this score dates from the day I saw a wolf die. We were eating lunch on a high rimrock, at the foot of which a turbulent river elbowed its way. We saw what we thought was a doe fording the torrent, her breast awash in white water. When she climbed the bank toward us and shook out her tail, we realized our error: it was a wolf. A half-dozen others, evidently grown pups, sprang from the willows and all joined in a welcoming melee of wagging tails and playful maulings. What was literally a pile of wolves writhed and tumbled in the center of an open flat at the foot of our rimrock.

In those days we had never heard of passing up a chance to kill a wolf. In a second we were pumping lead into the pack, but with more excitement than accuracy: how to aim a steep downhill shot is always confusing. When our rifles were empty, the old wolf was down, and a pup was dragging a leg into impassable slide-rocks.

We reached the old wolf in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes. I realized then, and have known ever since, that there was something new to me in those eyes - something known only to her and to the mountain. I was young then, and full of trigger-itch; I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunters' paradise. But after seeing the green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view.

Since then I have lived to see state after state extirpate its wolves. I have watched the face of many a newly wolfless mountain and seen the south-facing slopes wrinkle with a maze of new deer trails. I have seen every edible bush and seedling browsed, first to anaemic desuetude, and then to death. I have seen every edible tree defoliated to the height of a saddlehorn. Such a mountain looks as if someone had given God a new pruning shears and forbidden Him all other exercise. In the end the starved bones of the hoped-for deer herd, dead of its own too-much, bleach with the bones of the dead sage, or molder under the high-lined junipers.

I now suspect that just as a deer herd lives in mortal fear of its wolves, so does a mountain live in mortal fear of its deer. And perhaps with better cause, for while a buck pulled down by wolves can be replaced in two or three years, a range pulled down by too many deer may fail of replacement in as many decades. So also with cows. The cowman who cleans his range of wolves does not realize that he is taking over the wolf's job of trimming the herd to fit the range. He has not learned to think like a mountain. Hence we have dustbowls, and rivers washing the future into the sea.



We all strive for safety, prosperity, comfort, long life, and dullness. The deer strives with his supple legs, the cowman with trap and poison, the statesman with pen, the most of us with machines, votes, and dollars, but it all comes to the same thing: peace in our time. A measure of success in this is all well enough, and perhaps is a requisite to objective thinking, but too much safety seems to yield only danger in the long run. Perhaps this is behind Thoreau's dictum: In wildness is the salvation of the world. Perhaps this is the hidden meaning in the howl of the wolf, long known among mountains, but seldom perceived among men.



Canadian Geographic selected this image of Lady Evelyn Falls by QFN member Kyle Blaney to represent Northwest Territories in their 2020 Canadian Landscapes calendar.

The Quinte Field Naturalists Association, an affiliate of Ontario Nature, is a non-profit organization sponsoring nature education, conservation and research. It was founded in 1949 and incorporated in 1990 and encompasses the counties of Hastings and Prince Edward. The Quinte Field Naturalists Association is legally entitled to hold real estate and accept benefits. Quinte Field Naturalists meet on the fourth Monday of every month from September to March (except December), 7:00 pm, Sills Auditorium, Bridge Street United Church, 60 Bridge Street East, Belleville. In April we hold our annual dinner at an alternate time and location. New members and guests are always welcome.

Bring a friend.

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Next Newsletter Deadline – January 15, 2020

Please send submissions to sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com